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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2006

In Today's Papers

Erdogan in the US to Meet President Bush

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Vatan, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report President Bush and Prime Minister Erdogan will discuss the PKK, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, peace in the Middle East, Cyprus and energy issues. Erdogan will ask President Bush to take action against the PKK, and will offer to send 5,000 Turkish troops to Baghdad if the US eliminates the PKK presence in northern Iraq, Cumhuriyet claimed on Saturday. Erdogan will also tell Bush that if the PKK threat is removed by the US, Turkey will side with Washington and the international community against Iran. Papers expect President Bush to call for Turkey to open its ports and airports to Greek Cypriot vessels and airplanes, and reopen Halki Seminary in Istanbul. If Bush raises the issue of Armenia, says Vatan, Erdogan will say Turkey was ready to sit at the negotiating table with Armenia if Yerevan accepts the establishment of a commission of Turkish and Armenian historians to investigate 'genocide' claims. Today's meeting between Bush and Erdogan, the fourth over the past four years, will be the shortest one, lasting 55 minutes, say papers. Zaman says that prior to the meeting on Monday, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul told Newsweek that Turkey was ready to move against the PKK on its own if "our friends don't help us".

Yasemin Congar, writing from Washington for the mainstream daily Milliyet, observes that the "fight against PKK terrorism will be the major agenda item" during the Bush-Erdogan meeting and "this time Washington is prepared" to discuss it: "There have been some concrete developments following the appointment of General Ralston as the US special envoy. The ceasefire declared by the PKK has happened after Washington exerted influence over northern Iraq. American officials here talk about new steps on this issue by emphasizing that the appointment of Ralston demonstrates the intention to get a tangible result on the fight against PKK and this message has been received by the PKK as well. On the other hand, Washington also believes that some sort of legal measures by the

Turkish government to ensure the return of PKK members to Turkey will be the most effective way in the end to fully eliminate the PKK presence in northern Iraq. American officials are aware of Turkey's sensitivity on this matter and understand the need for taking concrete steps to ease public expectations so that the AKP government can consider such a step as the next measure."

Writing in the Islamist-oriented intellectual daily Zaman, Washington-based Ali Aslan notes that American officials "feel uncomfortable" that the "Turkish public's expectations are too high" for the Turkish Premier's visit to the White House: "Emphasizing the strategic vision document between the two countries, [US officials] suggest that such high level visits should be seen as routine exchanges. It is certainly important for Turkey to convey its policies to the world's super power and listen to the US positions. However we should not expect miraculous new developments related to the agenda items, including the fight against terror, energy, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon and Cyprus. Generally speaking, PM Erdogan's visit to Washington is a routine event for the White House but Ankara makes more of it in light of domestic political concerns."

Omer Taspinar of the Brookings Institute, writing on Turkish-US relations in the liberal-intellectual Radikal, observes that the events of 9/11 "shook up the international equilibrium" of the post-cold war era but also "created an opportunity for Turkey to underscore both its strategic importance and its status as a democratic model for the Islamic world": "Under normal circumstances, Turkish-American ties could even be much better than they were during the cold war. However things did not continue on this path for two reasons. First of all, the US considered the events of 9/11 a strong excuse to initiate a military operation against Iraq. This US approach caused clear opposition throughout

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the world, including in Turkey. Everybody stood against the idea of connecting 9/11 with Iraq. The US did not change its position despite the opposition and the US ended up alienating itself from the international community, Turkey included. The growth in PKK terrorism following Iraq's invasion by the US has become an additional factor contributing to the increasing anti-Americanism in Turkey. Today, PKK and Kurdish issues are the most prominently important ones in the relationship between Turkey and the US."

Sezer Addresses Parliament Inauguration

All papers report the speech delivered yesterday by President Ahmet Necdet Sezer at the inauguration of Turkish Parliament warned of a continued Islamic fundamentalist threat in Turkey and said the military, the guardians of the secular system, must be kept powerful. Sezer spoke of increased attempts to "roll back" the gains of the secular republic, including the appointment of Islamist officials to key civil service positions and efforts to "make religion part of society and politics." Sezer, whose term in office is to end May 2007, said freedoms could be restricted to protect secularism. Mainstream papers comment that the warnings of Sezer came as a response to Prime Minister Erdogan who had recently stated that there was no fundamentalist threat in Turkey.

On Iran, Sezer said Turkey respects Iran's right to pursue a nuclear program for civilian and peaceful purposes, but that Iran had to inspire trust in the international community. He reiterated the Turkish policy of supporting Iraq's unity and territorial integrity.

With respect to ties with the US, Sezer said Turkey's cooperation with the US against international terrorism and particularly in northern Iraq was a "significant test" and would be followed carefully by the Turkish nation.

Talabani Says the PKK is Finished

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others carry the Iraqi President Jalal Talabani remarks made to the Greek daily Eleftherotipia in which he said the PKK was "finished," and that it had no future. "I believe that we have entered into a period of normalization of ties with Turkey. The PKK had been a 'thorn' blocking establishment of confidence in ties between Iraq and Turkey, but now it is finished," said Talabani. The Iraqi President also called on Turkey to declare amnesty for the PKK

members in Mount Kandil.

Over the weekend, the outlawed PKK called a new unilateral ceasefire as of October 1, papers report on Sunday citing a pro-PKK website. The PKK said its militants would not use arms "unless attacked by the Turkish military." The announcement came after the statement of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani earlier last week that he persuaded the PKK to declare a ceasefire, and of the jailed leader of the group, Abdullah Ocalan, who made a ceasefire call for the PKK on Thursday.

Bahros Galali, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) representative in Ankara, told the Turkish press that Talabani had made his statement regarding the PKK ceasefire in line with the requests coming from Turkish officials.

Gonul Tells Rumsfeld of 'Map Incident' in Rome
Radikal reports Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul asked Secretary Rumsfeld at a NATO meeting in Slovenia on September 28-29 for an explanation concerning the use of a map depicting Turkey disintegrated by an American military officer at a NATO Defense College lecture in Rome. Gonul said Rumsfeld, unaware of what happened, said he was sorry and that he would order an investigation into the incident. Gonul underlined that the incident on September 15 was leaked to the press just days before Erdogan's travel to the US, speculating that someone wanted to disrupt the Turkish PM's visit.

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TV News:
(NTV, 7.00 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Justice Minister Cemil Cicek said fundamentalism was no crime according to existing laws, adding that fundamentalism was "a political concept."
- On October 3, Turkey's influential businessmen's grouping TUSIAD will hold ceremonies in Brussels, Paris and Berlin to mark the first anniversary of the opening of EU entry talks with Turkey.
- Opposition CHP said compromise with the ruling AKP regarding constitutional changes in election regulations was hardly possible. CHP said it will support only regulations for pulling down the election age to 25 years.
- One PKK terrorist was killed in fighting with the security forces in the southeastern province of Mardin.
- An explosion at a pipeline between Iran and Turkey near the Iranian town of Bazargan has disrupted gas shipments to Turkey.

International News

- International Herald Tribune claims the main purpose of Pope Benedict's visit to Turkey in November is to see the most senior cleric of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I.
- Over the weekend, President Bush signed legislation that would impose mandatory sanctions on entities that provide goods or services for Iran's weapons programs.
- Two have been killed and 75 others wounded in clashes between al-Fatah militants and security forces linked with the ruling Hamas.
- Britain's Independent warns Iraq may witness a new war between Arabs and Kurds in the northern provinces.
- A reformist party pulled out of Serbia's coalition government on Sunday because of its failure to capture war crimes suspect General Ratko Mladic.

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